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MONTANA HAS OFFENSIVE LINE STRENGTH

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IMMEDIATELY RELEASE

MISSOULA--

Graduations last spring hit heaviest on the offensive line at the University of Montana in Missoula.

Grizzly coach Jack Swarthout lost All-American tackle Tuufuli Uperesa and All-Big Sky linemen John Stedham and Bill Gutman and has five contenders for starting positions. Back this year are Willie Postler, guard and Ray Stachnik, center.

The top contender is Steve Okoniewski, a 6-3 and 235 lb. junior from Bremerton, Wash. Okoniewski competed at the University of Washington his freshman year before transferring to Everett J.C. in 1969. Last spring he transferred to the University of Montana and competed in spring drills for the Grizzlies.

Swarthout touts Okoniewski as one of the most physical players he has ever coached. He has tremendous power and really clears 'em out of there,' Swarthout said.

Okoniewski is constantly working out and is the first one up Mt. Sentinel to the M when the team runs that route. "We (coaches) stand at the bottom and watch the fellas go up the mountain and Steve is always first by a "mile," Swarthout said.

Okoniewski also works out with the weights everyday following practice. "He'll run off the field, get rid of the pads and start lifting," Swarthout said.

The Washington junior puts the same effort forth off the field also. He is an honors student in business administration.

Along with Okoniewski, Swarthout has Len Johnson. The Sacramento senior knows every position on the offensive line and is Montana's best blocker.

Swarthout said he is not big for a lineman, 6-0 and 220, but he always gets the job done. He prides himself in perfect execution.

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Ron Richards is a Butte sophomore that has earned himself a starting role at offensive guard. He, Johnson and Okoniewski will join Stachnik and Postler on the line.

The Butte sophomore is 6-3 and 235 lbs. Swarthout said, "For a sophomore, Richards is great. It takes awhile most of the time to pickup an offensive blocking system, but Richards has done an excellent job, the Montana coach said.

Also drawing praise for their play are 6-5 walkon Barry Darrow, Great Falls sophomore and senior Marty Frustaci, Los Angeles, Calif.

Swarthout expressed concern last winter about the statis of his offensive line. Last week he said he is confident the 1970 offensive line will be equal to that of the 1969 team.

Montana opens its season against North Dakota Saturday Sept. 12 in Billings.

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